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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
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A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 April 1998.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Follow-up Committee, which is composed of members of both the current and outgoing Bureaux of the Conference of Ministers:

Current Bureau

Chairman:	Uganda
First vice-Chairman:	Tunisia
Second Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Third Vice-Chairman:	Congo
Rapporteur:	South Africa

Outgoing Bureau

Chairman:	Malawi
First Vice-Chairman:	Ghana
Second Vice-Chairman:	Cameroon
Rapporteur:	Algeria

B. Agenda

3. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Consideration of the report of the First Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee
3. Any other business
4. Closure of meeting

C. Account of Proceedings

Opening of the meeting

4. In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary welcomed and thanked the ministers and plenipotentiaries participating in the meeting. He noted that the agenda was straightforward and consisted of one main item namely the consideration of the report of the preparatory meeting of experts of the Follow-up Committee. He particularly invited the Ministerial Follow-up Committee to endorse the resolution on the reform of the regional commissions and the recommendations contained therein. He welcomed the proposal of including a major item on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 1999, dealing with the issue of co-ordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

Consideration of the report of the First Preparatory Meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee (agenda item 2)

5. The Chairperson of the first preparatory meeting of experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee presented the report of the preparatory meeting of experts as well as the draft resolution recommended by the experts for adoption by the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers as contained in document E/ECA/MFC.1/4. The Ministerial Follow-up committee took note of the presentation, examined in detail the report of the experts as well as the draft resolution and adopted them as recommended. The report of the preparatory meeting of experts together with the resolution is annexed to this report.

Any other business (agenda item 3)

6. Under this item, the representative of Malawi, whose country served as the chairman of the Bureau of the twenty-second Meeting of the Conference of Ministers, congratulated the current bureau for the excellent work they had accomplished since the beginning of their tenure and for the able manner the Chairman had conducted the work of the first meeting of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development an planning.

Closure of meeting (agenda item 4)

7. The Chairman thanked participants for their support. He urged the secretariat and member States to ensure the full implementation of the resolution and its recommendations contained therein by taking the necessary action to enhance ECA's role at the subregional and regional levels.

8. He then declared the meeting closed.

Annex I

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS AT ITS FIRST MEETING

830(MFC.1) **Reform of the Regional Commissions**

A. Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, Regional and Subregional organizations in Africa.

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Recalling the terms of reference of the Commission as adopted by ECOSOC in resolution 671A(XXV) of 29 April 1958 and amended by its resolutions 974 D.1(XXXVI) of 5 July 1963, 1343 (XLV) of 18 July 1968 and 1978/68 of 4 August 1978,

Recalling further the various resolutions that have implications on the mandate and operations of the Commission including, in particular, General Assembly resolution 32/197 of 20 December 1977 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, General Assembly resolutions 33/202 of 29 January 1979, 44/211 of 21 December 1989 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995,

Noting with appreciation the endorsement by ECOSOC in resolution 718(XXVI) of 12 May 1991 on the revitalization of the mandate and operational framework of the regional economic commissions, Commission resolution 726(XXVII) of 22 April 1992 on strengthening the Economic Commission for Africa to face Africa's development challenges in the 1990s, 779(XXIX) of 4 May 1994 on strengthening the operational capacity of the Economic Commission for Africa, and 809(XXXI) on the New directions for ECA of 8 May 1996,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolutions 44/177 of 19 December 1990, 45/264 of 13 May 1991 and 46/235 of 13 April 1992 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, in which the call was made for the regional commissions to be enabled fully to play their role under the authority of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and that for those located in developing countries to be strengthened in the context of the overall objectives of the ongoing restructuring and revitalization process,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997 on Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform which invited ECOSOC, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 and the individual reviews each commission has already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies,

Having examined in-depth document E/ECA/MFC.1/2 entitled "Reforms of the regional Commissions: Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, Regional and Subregional organizations in Africa -- A Note by the Secretariat",

1. Welcomes the Note by the Secretariat[1]/;

2. Expresses its appreciation for the observations and analyses contained in the Note;

3. Decides to recommend as follows:

Recommendation 1: Reaffirm and support existing coordination mechanisms at the regional level.

An important first step in enhancing collaboration between ECA and the United Nations agencies is to reaffirm and support the team leadership role assigned to the regional commissions in resolution 32/197. The agencies should use the mechanism of a Regional Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) first suggested in 1994 by the Secretary General. ECOSOC should consider providing a legislative directive to this effect. The regional ACC would be useful in addressing several regional issues, including, questions such as follow-up to the global conferences, and various programmes on post-conflict reconstruction developments in Africa. In this regard the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers to be held in 1999 should consider in-depth coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa.

Recommendation 2: Adopt some principles for regional coordination.

The United Nations agencies in Africa should adopt some principles for regional coordination. The agencies should endeavour to foster regional coordination on the basis of promoting greater exchange of information on planned and ongoing work; improve complementarities among the programmes; draw on each other's competencies; and bring the pool of resources -financial and human - at their disposal to bear on policy issues of common interest.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Coordination at subregional level.

Coordination or collaboration among United Nations agencies in Africa should also be enhanced at the subregional level. At this level, this should take the form of development of joint ventures to support the specific activities of countries in a subregional framework. In this way, the complementarities and harmony sought at the regional level will be given greater impact and impetus. ECA's Subregional Development Centres should be used as an important vehicle for coordination at the subregional level.

1/ E/ECA/MFC.1/2

Recommendation 4: The role of ECA in normative and operational functions.

ECA, as a United Nations regional Commission and as part of the landscape of regional institutions in service of Africa's development has carried out valuable normative (analysis, advocacy, norm-setting) and operational activities which have been mutually complementary and supportive to the member States of the region. ECA should continue to undertake both categories of activities, it being recognized that its technical assistance plays a catalytic role in translating its normative work into concrete support for the development efforts of member States.

Recommendation 5: Enhanced cooperation among African organizations.

At the regional level, there is already an implicit specialization and division of labour among Africa's three premier intergovernmental organizations: OAU, ECA and ADB. Still, there remains a need to promote a more clear-cut division of responsibilities, and to rationalize and strengthen complementarities among the three organizations more strictly according to their mandates and competencies as a means of increasing their combined effectiveness, impact and efficiency in their collective mandate -- to oversee the overall development of Africa at the regional level. This calls for these African organizations to strengthen their Joint Secretariat by implementing among themselves similar strategies as outlined above for the United Nations system. In particular, they should :

(a) Strengthen coordination, including collaboration in programme development, planning of activities, monitoring and evaluation, geared to building upon and exploiting complementarities;

(b) Improve networking and communications at all staff levels, and not only at the level of the Chief Executives;

(c) Work to establish a common ethos among their staff, based on a common perspective of Africa's political, social and economic development challenges and opportunities, and a common zeal to move Africa forward; and,

(d) Streamline and coordinate their intergovernmental machineries: The governing bodies of all African organizations could be required to summarize, in a joint report, their main decisions for submission to the Summit of the African Heads of State and Government, which is the supreme organ of the African Economic Community.

B. Revision to the ECA Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001

The Ministerial Follow-up Committee,

Having Considered document E/ECA/MFC.1/3 entitled "First Revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001: Note by Secretariat",

Recalling the Commission resolution 809 (XXI) of 8 May 1996 in which the Commission endorsed the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 in the context of New directions for ECA,

Further recalling the Commission resolutions 810(XXXI) of 8 May 1996 and 828(XXXII) of 8 May 1997 which respectively called for the strengthening of the former Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) and their transformation to Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) with an extended programme and policy orientation, as well as, resolution 824(XXXI) of 8 May 1996 on the Follow-up to the Dakar and Beijing Conferences: Implementation of the Global and Regional Platforms of Action for the Advancement of Women,

Endorses the revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 involving the establishment of two new subprogrammes: Promoting the advancement of women and Supporting subregional activities for development.

Annex II

REPORT OF THE FIRST PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE MINISTERIAL FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE OF THE CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

A. Attendance and organization of work

1. The first preparatory meeting of Experts of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic and social development and planning was held at the United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 23 to 25 April 1998. The meeting was formally opened by Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States of the Follow-up Committee, which is composed of members of both the current and outgoing Bureaux of the Conference of Ministers:

Current Bureau

Chairman:	Uganda
First Vice-Chairman:	Tunisia
Second Vice-Chairman:	Burkina Faso
Third Vice-Chairman	Congo
Rapporteur:	South Africa

Outgoing Bureau

Chairman:	Malawi
First Vice-Chairman:	Ghana
Second Vice-Chairman:	Cameroon
Rapporteur:	Algeria

3. An observer from Morocco attended the meeting.

B. Agenda

4. On 23 April 1998, during its informal discussions, the meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Reform of the Regional Commissions: Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, Regional and Subregional organizations in Africa.
3. Proposed revisions to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001.
4. Any other business.
5. Adoption of the report.
6. Closure of the meeting.

C. Account of Proceedings

Opening of the meeting

5. In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary, Mr. K.Y. Amoako, welcomed participants to the meeting. He recalled that the Follow-up Committee was meeting in compliance with the Commission's resolution 826(XXXII) of 8 May 1997 which had decided that since the Conference of Ministers now meets on biennial basis, the Follow-up Committee meet in inter-sessional years to review Commission affairs. The next ordinary meeting of the Conference will be held in 1999.

6. Referring to the agenda of this meeting, the Executive Secretary said that it consisted of two main items, namely: the relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organizations in Africa; and the first revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001. He indicated that the report on the relationships between ECA and other organizations has been prepared for the consideration of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, to enable it make an input into the review of the regional commissions by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that was required by General Assembly resolution 52/12B of 19 December 1997, on Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform. The Executive Secretary said that following the internal reforms ECA had undertaken, it was important to review the external context in which the Commission was operating in general and to examine ECA's relationships with other organizations in particular. He reviewed ECA's partnerships in African development and highlighted the patterns and potentials of cooperation between ECA, United Nations agencies and African regional and subregional organizations. He said that since forging effective partnerships was one of the guiding principles of ECA's reforms, the Commission was well positioned to develop fruitful collaborative relationships with other organizations.

7. He informed the meeting that the revisions to the Commission's Medium-term Plan were intended to bring ECA's programme structure in line with mandates that the Conference of Ministers had given to ECA when the Plan was adopted in 1996. The creation of two new subprogrammes, one dealing with gender issues and the other supporting subregional activities for development, would further enhance the organizational and managerial effectiveness of the Commission in the delivery of services to member States.

8. The Executive Secretary looked forward to the views and recommendations of the Committee of these two items on its agenda.

Reform of the regional commissions: Relationships between ECA, United Nations agencies, Regional and Subregional organizations in Africa [agenda item 2]

9. The Committee considered the document (E/ECA/MFC.1/2), "Reform of the Regional Commissions: Relations between ECA, United Nations agencies, regional and subregional organisations in Africa -- A Note by the Secretariat". The deliberations on this item covered a number of points, the main ones of which were: the purpose and

format of the meetings of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee; the need to strengthen coordination among United Nations agencies operating in Africa, as well as, between them and African intergovernmental organizations at the regional and subregional levels; the need to take African priorities and specific circumstances fully into account in the ongoing review of the regional commissions; the recognition that Africa's development problems, are in part, due to endogenous factors and that reform measures should address Africa's own responsibilities; and the role of ECA's Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) in strengthening the performance of the United Nations system in Africa at the subregional level.

10. Regarding the purpose and format of the meetings of the Ministerial Follow-up Committee, an observation was made as to whether the Follow-up Committee would be expected to undertake assessments of the work of the Commission since the previous session of the Conference of Ministers. It was noted, however, that under the terms by which the Ministerial Follow-up Committee was established, the main purpose of its meetings was to address special issues arising between the biennial sessions of the Conference of Ministers as identified by the Executive Secretary for its attention. In deliberating and reaching decisions on these issues, the Follow-up Committee had the authority to speak on behalf of the Conference of Ministers, which is the governing body of the Commission. On this occasion, it was observed that there were only two main issues calling for the attention of the Follow-up Committee. These were the review of the role of the regional commissions by ECOSOC under General Assembly resolution 52/12B and the proposed first revision of the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001.

11. On the issue of the review of the role of the regional commissions by ECOSOC in the context of the second track of United Nations system-wide reforms, the consensus among the members of the Follow-up Committee was that emphasis should be placed on strengthening inter-agency and inter-organizational coordination at the national, subregional and regional levels in Africa. It was proposed that coordination and collaboration among United Nations agencies operating at the subregional and regional levels in Africa should be a major item on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conference of Ministers in 1999.

12. It was noted that, under General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 and 50/120 of 20 December 1995, the regional commissions, including ECA, were given a clear mandate to provide team-leadership to United Nations agencies operating in their regions and enhance coordination of United Nations development activities at the regional and subregional levels. It was noted, at the same time, that under General Assembly resolutions 44/211 of 22 December 1989, 47/199 of 22 December 1992, and 50/120, the Resident Coordinator system had been set up at the national level to provide coordination to United Nations system operational activities, eliminate unnecessary duplication and focus on the development objectives and priorities identified by the member States themselves under the leadership of national Governments.

13. In considering what form the strengthened United Nations inter-agency coordination might take at the regional and subregional levels, the Committee questioned

the effective functioning of the national Resident Coordinator system. It was observed that the national Resident Coordinator system was still far from functioning as intended. Questions were raised regarding continuing weaknesses in inter-agency collaboration at the national level, as well as inadequate exercise of ownership by member States in operational activities. It was proposed, therefore, that much greater consideration needed to be given to an appropriate holistic model for strengthening inter-agency coordination under African conditions and that this should also look at coordination arrangements at the regional and subregional levels.

14. With regard to strengthening coordination at the regional level, the Committee expressed strong support for the operationalization in Africa of the regional version of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (regional ACC), chaired by ECA. It was observed that proposals to this effect had been presented by the United Nations Secretary-General in 1994. It was further observed that regional ACCs had been established in other regions (such as East Asia and the Pacific).

15. The Committee emphasized that the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions and the reform of United Nations activities in Africa that should follow from this must take into account Africa's specific circumstances, constraints and development needs in the context of globalization and Africa's continuing sense of marginalization. In this regard, the consensus of the Committee was that the role of ECA in providing various forms of assistance to African States individually as well as collectively at the regional and subregional levels in addressing these problems continued to be as important as ever. The Committee took note that, prior to undertaking wide-ranging programmatic and institutional reforms in 1995, the Commission had carried out a review of Africa's strategic development objectives and priorities at the threshold of the twenty-first century. It was also noted that the Commission is in the process of consulting member States and leading subregional Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) with a view to identifying specific subregional development priorities in each of Africa's five subregions. The Committee observed that member States wished to exercise greater ownership over the operational activities of the agencies of the United Nations system, including those of the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

16. The Committee placed considerable emphasis on the primary role that should be played by ECA's Subregional Development Centres (SRDCs) in strengthening the coordination and overall performance of the United Nations system in Africa. It was observed that the Conference of Ministers had directed that SRDCs be strengthened by transferring substantial resources to them and by broadening their mandate to include serving as facilitators of the integration activities of the United Nations system operating within the subregions. The Committee noted that the Commission was on track to implementing the decisions of the Conference of Ministers on strengthening SRDCs. These Centres therefore had the capacity to provide effective coordination and team-leadership for United Nations operational activities at the subregional level.

First Revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 [agenda item 3]

17. The Committee, under this agenda item, considered the document (E/ECA/MFC.1/3), "First Revision to the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 -- A Note by the Secretariat".

18. It was recalled that when the Medium-term Plan, 1998-2001 was adopted by the General Assembly in 1997, ECA's work programme was organized under five subprogrammes, as defined under the Commission's new strategic directions, which identified five areas of focus and two cross-cutting issues. After commencing the implementation of this work programme structure, it had quickly become clear that the effectiveness of the Commission's work programme would be greatly enhanced by separating two programme concentrations -- promoting the advancement of women, and supporting subregional activities for development, from the subprogrammes under which they had been approved.

19. The first had been approved as part of the existing subprogramme on facilitating economic and social policy analysis. The new subprogramme would be implemented by the African Centre for Women. It was noted that even after the creation of the new subprogramme on promoting the advancement of women, gender issues would continue to be treated as cutting across the entire work programme of the Commission.

20. The second area of concentration had been approved as part of the subprogramme on promoting regional cooperation and integration. The new subprogramme supporting the subregional activities for development will comprise the work programmes and activities of ECA's five SRDC's. It was observed that the Centres would serve as platforms for strengthening ECA's outreach at the subregional and country levels and that they would work in close partnership with and in technical support of, African subregional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations on development priorities specific to their subregions and identified in consultation with their member States.

21. The Committee observed that the separation of these two concentrations and the creation of two new subprogrammes for them would be instrumental in sharpening focus on the issues of concern, strengthening resource mobilization and decentralization of decision-making in these areas, while strengthening accountability. It was further noted that the proposed revision did not have additional resource implications, as it was aimed only at bringing about greater clarification of the previously approved Medium-term Plan without any addition or reduction of activities.

22. The Committee also noted that the creation of the new subprogramme on subregional activities was to reflect the expanded mandate of SRDCs which went beyond promoting regional cooperation and integration at the subregional level to the provision of essential support and services across the development spectrum to member States.

23. The Committee endorsed the proposed revisions to the Medium-term Plan to create the two new subprogrammes. The Committee noted, however, that the creation of the new subprogrammes was a reversal in the trend of reducing the number of subprogrammes and cautioned that care should be taken to maintain programme focus.

Any other business [agenda item 4]

24. Under this item, it was pointed out that the Economic and Social Commission of the African Economic Community (AEC-ECOSOC) had been scheduled to take place in Cairo on the same dates as the meeting of the ECA Ministerial Follow-up Committee. Since the same ministers and experts were expected to attend both meetings, the Committee urged the African premier intergovernmental organizations -- the Organization of African Unity (OAU), ECA and the African Development Bank (ADB) -- within the framework of their Joint Secretariat, to greatly improve the level of coordination among themselves, to ensure that their major events do not conflict as has been the case on this occasion.

Adoption of the report [agenda item 5]

25. The Committee considered the report as well as the draft resolution and adopted them.

Closure of meeting [agenda item 6]

26. The Deputy Executive Secretary thanked the bureau members of the Committee and the secretariat for a job well done.

27. The Chairperson also thanked the members of the Committee for their active participation and declared the meeting close.